



# NEWS RELEASE

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## ***SBA-BACKED LOANS TO WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS AT RECORD LEVELS***

**WASHINGTON** – The U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) has nearly tripled both the number and dollar value of approved loans to women entrepreneurs since FY 1992, SBA Administrator Aida Alvarez announced today, in celebration of *National Women's History Month*.

Since FY 1992, SBA has backed more than 69,440 loans amounting to \$10.7 billion for women-owned small businesses. In FY 1999 alone, the SBA backed 10,244 loans worth \$1.9 billion to women-owned small businesses.

In commemoration of *National Women's History Month*, Administrator Alvarez underscored the role of women as an important force: **"Women play a huge economic, cultural and social role in every part of American life. Women are at the forefront of change and progress in this country."**

Today there are 9.1 million women-owned businesses in the U.S., representing nearly 40 percent of all businesses. They employ 27.5 million people and generate more than \$3.6 trillion in sales. Women are starting new firms at twice the rate of all other businesses.

**"Addressing the special needs of women business owners is essential to our national economy,"** said Administrator Alvarez. **"The SBA impacts the growth and expansion of women-owned small businesses more than it ever has before. Through financial, technical and management assistance, the U.S. Small Business Administration is doing more than ever to help level the playing field for women entrepreneurs who still face unique obstacles in the world of business."**

In addition to 7(a) and 504 loan programs, the SBA also offers the MicroLoan Program for small start-up businesses. Since it began, the program has provided \$88.7 million in loans, with women entrepreneurs receiving more than 41 percent of that amount.

Under the Loan Pre-qualification Program, launched in 1994, women have received more than \$117 million worth of loans. The program helps guide applicants through a loan application process and pre-qualifies them before they apply at the bank.

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In FY 1999, SBA's Small Business Investment Company Program invested \$55 million in women-owned small businesses. The program also licensed three women-managed venture capital companies in 1998, the first to base their investment strategies on helping women-owned companies. So far, the three companies have invested in almost thirty women-owned or women-managed businesses.

In federal procurement, SBA is working to increase government contracting opportunities for women business owners. To achieve this, the SBA has signed agreements with 10 federal agencies. In FY 1998, women-owned small businesses received more than \$4 billion in federal contract dollars.

In addition, the SBA administers the Women's Business Center Program, a unique public-private partnership providing business and technical assistance to women. Eighty centers located nationwide provide long-term training, counseling, networking and mentoring to potential and existing entrepreneurs with special emphasis on socially and economically disadvantaged women. Last year, the women's business centers served more than 14,000 clients.

The SBA also has the Online Women's Business Center, a free interactive Web site offering information on best business practices, management techniques, networking, counseling, industry news and research, and other useful information to women who want to start or grow a business. It is available in English, Spanish, and Russian. The Web site receives almost two million hits per month. It was mentioned as one of the best sources for information on services available to women entrepreneurs in *Forbes Magazine* February 2000 issue in which the SBA Web site was included in the magazine's "Best of the Web" list.

SBA is moving forward to assist more women in business each day by working in partnership with a variety of women's business groups. SBA has signed formal partnership agreements with 15 leading business and professional women's organizations to reach women entrepreneurs more effectively with information about SBA programs. The organizations represent more than two million women and include the following:

- The National Association of Women Business Owners
- The National Federation of Black Women Business Owners
- Business and Professional Women/USA
- National Association of Female Executives
- Women's Yellow Pages

*For more information on all of SBA's programs for small businesses, call the SBA Answer Desk at 1-800 U ASK SBA, or visit the SBA's extensive Web site at [www.sba.gov](http://www.sba.gov).*

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